

# DUNEDIN METHODIST PARISH

*Finding Good in everyone Finding God in everyone*

[www.dunedinmethodist.org.nz](http://www.dunedinmethodist.org.nz)



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## PARISH BULLETIN

24 JULY 2022

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 31 JULY 2022		
9.30am	Mornington	D Poultney
	Mosgiel	Combined with Mornington
	Glenaven	Combined with Mornington

**PLEASE NOTE: SUNDAY 31<sup>ST</sup> JULY is a Combined Service being held at Mornington Methodist Church, 9.30am**

## MORNINGTON METHODIST WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

### Meeting Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2022 in the Mornington Methodist Church at 2pm

All members of the Fellowship and friends of the Church are invited to attend this Meeting.

Our speaker will be Professor Lynne Taylor. Lynne is the Jack Somerville Lecturer in Pastoral Theology at the University of Otago.

Please join us for this presentation and afternoon tea.

**ALL MOSGIEL CHURCHES** have been invited to join with Anchorage Church at 7:30pm on Thursday 4th August to hear Nadia Dick. Nadia has a Bachelor of Theology Masters of Counselling and a qualified Mediator, worked for years in overseas mission Kampala, Cairns and the highlands of Papua New Guinea. She now lives in Christchurch.

### **CHANGE IS OUR ELEMENT**

If you're someone who enjoys cloud-watching, you are not alone. People have been doing it for centuries.

Here's just one example of the sort of imagined meaning given to shifting skies, in a poem by P B Shelley (1792-1822):



#### The Cloud

I am the daughter of Earth and Water,  
 And the nursling of the Sky;  
 I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;  
 I change, but I cannot die,  
 For after the rain when with never a stain  
 The pavilion of Heaven is bare  
 And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams  
 Build up the blue dome of air,  
 I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,  
 And out of the caverns of rain,

Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,  
I arise and unbuild it again.

Nothing changes faster than South Island weather: a warm Norwester one day, snow the next. This was a common pattern my father pointed out to us kids who were wanting to play outside and assuming tomorrow would be the same as today. Sometimes in the August holidays in Central we'd be ice-skating in the morning on a frozen Manorburn Dam. Yet a few hours later, as dangerous cracks appeared in the ice and puddles formed, we'd be taking off our jackets complaining we were too hot – even getting sunburnt.

Change is our element, as water is for fish. We know no life other than one which changes every day, every minute, every second, whether we are conscious of that or oblivious to it. At the same time, human beings yearn for constancy probably more than anything else, and go on – despite evidence to the contrary – believing it might be possible.

When studying theology (= god-talk), you discover deities like Kali, the Hindu goddess of death, time, and change. But in the Hebrew Scriptures I wasn't expecting to encounter the idea that God changes. The opposite, really: the word 'steadfast' is often used of God, as well as of the faithful believer. Isaiah calls: 'Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord God you have an everlasting rock.'

Since the Christchurch and Kaikoura earthquakes, I've been unable to trust that the ground we walk on will stay put, let alone eternally. Novelist and poet Fiona Farrell has written whole books about this destabilizing notion – that the land itself is not as 'steadfast' (Old English = 'standing firm') as we thought.

Again, I've become unable to trust that democracy will endure in the same form we've known it, since the previous President of the US came to power. His reversion to the 'good ole days' in the slogan 'Make America Great Again' might have indicated, for Republican believers, a return to steadfastness; yet for Democrats it is as if an earthquake had happened in their political midst.

The main thing about change is that we want to believe it is for the better, we're not so keen on changes for the worse. Nor is there any such thing as a permanent change, as in *Roe vs. Wade*.

To return to the God of the Bible: the prophets and other writers were expressing exactly the misgivings I felt about the earthquakes and regime changes, but putting them in a context of an overarching God, the ultimate parent, who can change his mind towards us, depending on how we behave (whether we keep his commandments). He who is Lord of the universe can present the face of tumultuous anger and judgement but also the tenderness of a new mother, as Rev David Bromell preached at Glenaven. God can be moved to condemnation, but equally to pity and mercy.

The reasoning of those writers was that God was in charge of everything, so he directed the Assyrian armies to invade from the north and carry off the Israelites to Babylon. (How else could such a terrible thing be explained?) Then, with another regime change, he directed King Cyrus of Persia to return the captives to their home and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem of Judah. Nothing that happens was beyond God's compass – neither earthquake, nor fire, nor political upheaval nor reversal of material fortune.

Over the last few weeks our family has been made painfully aware of the changes that come with age, with cancer, with the slide towards death of a body that cannot save itself, and a mind that is bewildered by everything, including its own decline. The beauty of it is that this is a natural process, the way it should be.

On the other hand, it is now apparent to all but a few that the extreme weather events we have seen recently – severe flooding and coastal erosion, the devastation of high winds and snowstorms, like the fires of recent years – are not the way things should be. It is human beings who have driven a juggernaut of destructive change through the world's societies and ecosystems, instead of going with Nature's flow. Change may be our element, but climate change is good for no living thing. Something about our behaviour must change.

*Helen Watson White*